



## JAPAN'S MEIJI REFORM AND EXPERIENCE LESSONS FOR VIETNAM IN THE PROCESS OF INDUSTRIALIZATION AND MODERNIZATION OF THE COUNTRY

**Nguyen Ho Thanh<sup>i</sup>**

An Giang University,  
Ho Chi Minh City National University,  
Vietnam

### **Abstract:**

In the development process of Japanese history, the Meiji period was of great significance. Thanks to the achievements of this reform, Japan can advance quickly on the path of industrialization and modernization and become the first capitalist power in Asia. The Meiji reform with its historical role and meaning has become an essential element in promoting the development of Japanese history in modern times. On the Asian level, the achievements of reform have much influence on regional countries. Many Asian countries have turned to the island nation and want to follow the development path of Japan. Over 150 years have passed, but the lessons learned from the Meiji reform are still valid, especially for Vietnam in the period of industrialization and modernization. The general article of Japan's Meiji reform (1868) is carried out in the fields of economy, politics, military, culture, and education. On that basis, give some useful lessons for Vietnam in the process of industrialization and modernization of the country today.

**Keywords:** Meiji reform, Japan, lessons, experiences, Vietnam

### **1. Introduction**

Japan was the first country to take the lead and arrive early in the Asian neo-modernist movement. The Meiji government rapidly modernized the country so its independence and international status established itself. The modernization has been carried out totally and comprehensively in all areas of the country. Japan was soon aware of the importance of asserting its equal position with advanced Western countries in the fields of culture, education, religion, and beliefs. For Asian countries, including Vietnam, the Meiji Restoration is always appreciated, is a practical lesson, a successful example in the modernization of the country in many fields. The successful experiences of Japan in the

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<sup>i</sup> Correspondence: email [nhothanh@agu.edu.vn](mailto:nhothanh@agu.edu.vn)

Meiji period can help Vietnam suitably apply the situation of the country, especially in the process of industrialization and modernization of the country today.

## **2. Overview of Japan's Meiji reform**

In the 1950s, Japan faced the pressure of many Western powers. In addition to the Netherlands, which has had trading relations before, until this period, many Western countries such as Britain, the US, France, and Russia all came to Japan to ask Japan to open their doors. Due to Japan's geographic location in the region, it is an important link in the shipping route from Europe to Asia by sea, especially not far from China - a large, populous, and wealthy country about resources. From here, Japan became a strategic springboard, an important military base to be able to penetrate vast China and southern countries. In May 1853, American warships landed in Edo, intimidating the shogunate. The US President asked Japan to open the door, accompanied by a threat, if necessary, to decide a battle to win or defeat. The shogunate government was very confused and forced to consult the emperor and the vassals. The act proves that the time has come for the Shogun to feel that their ruling position is no longer secure. The attitude of the emperor and the Daimyo was against trade with America or any other country. Meanwhile, the Shogunate was also divided into many different opinions. But in the face of American power, the shogunate was forced to make concessions and sign the first inequality treaty with America (March 31, 1854). Under this treaty, Japan had to open the ports of Simodo and Hakodate for the US to trade and the US to set up a consulate at Simda. Not stopping there, Japan had to sign a series of treaties: with the Netherlands (August 18, 1858), with Russia (August 19, 1958), with France (October 9, 1958). The above inequality treaties have ended nearly 200 years of secluded closure of the Tokugawa government. The above treaties have seriously violated national interests, bringing Japan into international relations not as a status and status of a completely independent and equal country, but depending on Western countries. However, the above treaties help Japan avoid the risk of a confrontation while the force relationship is not in Japan's favor. Facing the risk of national interests being seriously violated by the great ambitions of Western colonial countries put Japan in an unprecedented challenge.

The unequal treaties that the shogunate signed with foreign countries caused the social class to react strongly. The anti-Shogun movement erupted in the 60s of the twentieth century, causing the shogunate to fall. In January 1868, after taking the throne, Emperor Meiji carried out a series of progressive reforms aimed at bringing Japan out of the status of a backward feudal state, the Meiji Restoration.

The Meiji Restoration, also known as the Meiji Reform, or the Meiji Revolution is a series of reforms, reforms leading to great changes in the social and political structure of Japan, beginning from 1868 to 1912. This was a great event, a landmark, meant to pave the way for the transformation of feudal Japan into a capitalist country, from colonial or semi-colonial country geography. The reformation brought the Japanese economy to strong growth in the last 30 years of the 19th century and turned Japan into military

power in 1905. As a result, Japan developed the country on the current path to modernize and avoid the invasion of Western countries in the Modern Age.

Several months after taking power, Thien Hoang issued a "5-point declaration", promising to build the country on the path of reform. This is reflected in the major reforms in the fields of economy, politics, society, military, culture, and education.

Firstly, about politics. The emperor announced the abolition of the shogunate, established a new government, in which representatives of the capitalized aristocracy played an important role, exercising equality among citizens. In 1889, a new Constitution was enacted, a constitutional monarchy was established. The Meiji government regime was organized according to the model of an isolated three-right state, influenced by the US but the Japanese king had supremacy. The central government consists of three houses: the government (the government cabinet), the right (the agency in charge of justice), and the left (the agency that promulgates the law). Administrative reform led to the birth of a unified Japan. Feudal regulations that hindered the development of society were abolished. The state is organized according to the Western model, manages and governs society by law, ensuring fairness. The administrative system that was born from the Meiji reform has brought into play its positivity in the modernization of Japan.

Secondly, economically. The Government has implemented monetary unification policies, unifying markets, allowing land trading, enhancing the development of the capitalist economy in rural areas, building infrastructure, roads, and bridge drain. Based on the development of agriculture, industry, commerce, and prosperity, the number of foreign ships docking in Japan as well as Japanese ships going abroad is increasing. The above-mentioned measures have affected the rapid and fairly steady development of the capitalist economy in general and agriculture and commerce in particular in Japan.

Thirdly, about the military. The most important goal of neo-modernism is to protect the independence of the country, so it must build and foster military might. The army was trained in the Western style, the military service regime instead of the enlistment regime. The Meiji Reformation created a strong army, ensuring national security to continue carrying out the renovation. The Japanese army was led by Samurai, the feudal "samurai" moral basis still exists. The army was loyal to the king, and the officer was considered the official of the soldiers. Militaristic thought in the military was born. Besides, the shipbuilding industry is focused on developing, producing weapons and ammunition, and inviting foreign military experts.

Fourthly, about education. Modern education is the foundation and driving force for economic development and is an effective tool for the modernization of Japan. The educational system is stricter and more practical than the Eastern education system. Along with the public school system, the system of private, complementary schools, and temple schools are also encouraged. The purpose of Japan is to socialize education. The Japanese view is to focus on vocational education and elementary education rather than university education. The new educational approach fully grasped the slogan "Western science and Eastern morality", concretized in the Emperor's edict issued in 1890.

Therefore, the Japanese government recruited foreign professors. Along with that is sending students to study abroad in Western countries.

The government's educational reform not only aims to improve the intellectual level of the people but also changes the way Japanese people work and think, creating people with knowledge, patriotism, determination, and ability to build a rich, strong, and modern country. That is also a solid basis for building a powerful and advanced country that is imbued with national identity.

Thus, the neo-Meiji reform was meant to pave the way for the transformation of feudal Japan into a capitalist country, out of a colonial or semi-colonial country. The reforms brought the Japanese economy to strong growth in the last 30 years of the nineteenth century, making Japan a military power in 1905. The development of the Japanese economy gave rise to monopoly companies with the oligarchs manipulating the Japanese economy and politics.

### **3. Lessons learned for Vietnam from the Meiji reform in the process of industrialization and modernization of the country**

Looking back on the Meiji reform (1868-1912), we see that the reform's influence is no longer limited to the Japanese territory, but has reached regional limits. In particular, Vietnam is a country with many similarities with Japan, so the lessons learned from the Meiji reform will be of useful value for the country's renewal by the Party, State, and people. proceed.

Firstly, the drastic news in reform and innovation; innovate comprehensively, synchronously, creatively, respect the laws of objectivity and practice. The history of modernization of Japanese politics, economy, and culture proceeded almost in parallel or, if at all, only a little slower than the unification of the United States. In Vietnam, although Tu Duc was a relatively active king, he also had a certain sense of the country's political renewal, but his innovations were only signs of improvement. in terms of form but has not yet reached the change in nature. Meanwhile, the Meiji king of Japan made major and radical reforms for Japan. From this reform, Japan quickly rose to become a world power. This is evidence that Vietnam needs to do drastic and thorough development in all fields for the machine to operate smoothly and efficiently. Reality has been shown, must be reformed comprehensively and synchronously in all fields of social life; from awareness, thought to practice; from the Party's leadership, State management to activities in each part of the political system; from the activities of the central level to the activities of localities and grassroots. In the renovation process, it must be drastically implemented with appropriate and effective steps, forms, and methods; overcoming the hasty, subjective situation will cause instability, even confusion, creating opportunities for hostile forces to destroy the innovation; at the same time, it is necessary to be proactive, dynamic, unceasingly creative, overcome the situation of conservatism, stagnation, and missed development opportunities. Must respect the law of objectivity. Considering the development of practice as a requirement and basis for renewing

theoretical thinking, lines, undertakings, mechanisms, and policies. All lines, undertakings, policies, and laws of the Party and State must be derived from reality. Must stick to reality, attach importance to practical summation, theoretical research to adjust, supplement and develop innovative ways. For the people to believe, support the people and actively implement the reform policy, requiring the Party and State to promptly and effectively solve problems posed by reality; promptly adjust and supplement institutions, institutions, mechanisms, and policies inappropriateness, hindering the development; do it together with doing.

Secondly, to successfully industrialize and modernize, it is necessary to build a strong nation that brings together the unanimous solidarity of all strata of the people. The State must have appropriate economic, cultural, social, and legal policies and effectively implement them through the public apparatus. Only a strong state with a stable and open institution that gathers the will and aspirations of the people can ensure a harmonious combination between economic development and social development. Such a State is only capable of overcoming shortcomings and limitations of the market economy in the era of globalization. The State must have a mechanism to exploit and promote the activeness and creativity of workers effectively, create conditions for the less fortunate to ensure their lives, and integrate into society, creating consensus society. The State of Japan during the Thien Hoang Minh Tri period did well with the above tasks.

Thirdly, to build an economic structure in the direction of open reform and integration into the globalization trend. Investment in the development of several domestic industries has comparative advantages

A country that wants to develop and achieve high growth must have a reasonable industry structure. For Vietnam, to realize the goal of industrialization and modernization of the country, it is necessary to structure the industry towards improving productivity, quality, and efficiency associated with promoting international economic integration. With the construction of an economic structure in the direction of open reform and integration into the globalization trend, Vietnam will increasingly participate deeply in international economic integration activities, becoming more and more popular speaking with a high sense of responsibility in regional and world forums, contributing to market expansion, attracting foreign direct investment into Vietnam, and facilitating an export-oriented economic model import market, contribute to the industrialization and modernization strategy, at the same time affirm the image and position of a successful country in the innovation process.

Fourthly, to build economic institutions in the direction of international economic integration and a national appropriate region

Based on lessons learned, Vietnam needs to make appropriate adjustments to the macroeconomic balances of the economy (cumulative balance - investment and consumption, budget revenues and expenditures, investment in production and development investment; external and domestic debt, the structure of each type of debt), as well as socio-political relations. It is necessary to adjust foreign relations (both economic and political) to suit the strategic interests of the country, and at the same time

to approach shifts in the relationship of world economic and political forces, pay attention to development trends. To step by step formulate a clear and proactive roadmap for the development and integration of the country in all fields and aspects. Avoid the situation that everything in general and the situation when specific problems arise, local are passive, confused and consequently the risk of losing control of the system, the whole. In the strategic direction of foreign development, in addition to proactive integration, it is necessary to achieve the goal of sustainable development with a green, clean, efficient economy, and the highest goal is to improve the quality of life. of people.

Fifthly, need to build human resources to meet practical needs, paying special attention to the fields of education and training

This is a particularly important lesson of Japanese success when it has successfully industrialized and modernized. Accordingly, the development of education, training of specialists, and a workforce of solid professional qualifications and good health must be considered a key task. The Japanese experience shows the great role the Meiji king played in the reforms' success. More than anyone else, the Meiji was aware of the need to reform the country and attracted social forces to join, support the movement, and gathered around him a team of Talent managers.

Based on Japan's experiences related to high-quality human resources education and training, Vietnam can draw useful lessons in implementing the reform fundamentally and comprehensively the education of the country. Accordingly, it is necessary to eliminate the heavy education on theory, less practicality and education must be associated with practical life and practical service. Besides, the concept of education is not only about educating in terms of knowledge, but also needs to thoroughly educate about ethical personalities such as self-awareness, sense of discipline, and industriousness difficult diligence at work. Another thing is that in training, to avoid the situation of following the times, if, before the 90s of the twentieth century, we were especially interested in the basic disciplines, specializing in theory without paying attention to appropriate for the occupations that serve the practical life. And after the 1990s we again tend to pursue "pragmatic" disciplines that lead to an imbalanced one-sided training situation. Regarding the issue of sending students abroad to study, although our Party and State pay attention and invest funds, the effect is very little. The reason for this is because first of all, the selection method is not old and orderly. In this regard, we have not been able to do what Japan did more than 150 years ago. Moreover, the commitment and commitment to international students is quite loose, leading to a situation where students do not return to their home country after graduation. Besides, the state has not had satisfactory remuneration policies for the graduates returning from abroad. Even in some cases, students are not able to find jobs suitable for the expertise for which they are trained. In the matter of inviting foreign experts, we need to be proactive in choosing to avoid passive reception and must have a "special" preferential policy for foreign experts.

#### 4. Conclusion

Emperor Meiji reformed according to Duy Tan ideology, the policy of combining Western technology with Japanese morality, that is, Japan comes from culture, from its internal resources to continue to collect the exogenous, technological, scientific and technical resources of the West for industrialization and modernization. Thus, the Meiji Reform in Japan has implemented comprehensive reforms from economy, culture, politics to science and military; proposed the slogan of Japanese ethics - Western technology. Thereby, Japan has dynamized endogenous resources, maximizing the creative spirit to absorb exogenous resources, creating a Japanese miracle in history. Looking back on the doi moi in Vietnam, we have the right to affirm the achievements that Vietnam has achieved over the past 30 years, especially in economic terms. However, for the Vietnamese economy to take off and stand shoulder to shoulder with other countries in the region as well as integrate deeply into the regionalization and globalization process, Vietnam must undertake more extensive reforms, more thoroughly, based on absorbing lessons learned from the Meiji Reform, especially completely removing obstacles on the path of national renewal and renovation.

#### Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare no conflicts of interests.

#### About the Author

Nguyen Ho Thanh was born at An Giang province in Vietnam, on January 5, 1986. The author's educational background is as follows: Master of Politics is a Ph.D. student at the Institute of Social Sciences and Humanities, Vinh University, Vietnam. His work experiences: An Giang University, Ho Chi Minh City National University, Vietnam (2008 until now). Current and previous research interests are in the areas of politics, defense, and security, culture.

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